DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 431 548 PS 027 742

AUTHOR	Wolery, Mark
TITLE	Disabilities & Transitions.
INSTITUTION	National Center for Early Development & Learning, Chapel Hill, NC.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-12-00
NOTE	4p.; Excerpts from a paper presented during a "Kindergarten Transitions" synthesis conference by the National Center for Early Development and Learning (Charlottesville, VA, 1998).
CONTRACT	R307A60004
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	NCEDL Spotlight; n6 Dec 1998
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Disabilities; Early Childhood Education; Kindergarten; Periodicals; *School Readiness; Special Needs Students; *Student Adjustment; *Transitional Programs; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS	Transition Management; *Transitional Activities

ABSTRACT

This newsletter discusses transition and outcome issues for young children with disabilities. Topics discussed include issues related to transition program administration, staff, families, and services. (KB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 431 548

Disabilities & Transitions
Spotlight Number 6
December 1998

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PS 027742

National Center for Early Development & Learning

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

National Center for Early Development & Learning

Spotlight No. 6 Dec. 1998

Disabilities & Transitions

Excerpts from a paper presented during a "Kindergarten Transitions" synthesis conference by the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL) in early 1998 in Charlottesville, VA. Mark Wolery of the University of North Carolina surveyed current literature for his paper, "Children with Disabilities in Early Elementary School," which is expected to be part of a book to be published by Paul Brookes Publishing Co. Inc.

Transition issues for young children with disabilities

Administrative issues: A common difficulty in the transition of children with disabilities from preschool programs to school-age programs is having multiple sending agencies and a single receiving agency. A commonly recommended solution is to establish a community-wide interagency transition policy.

A related administrative issue is the transfer of confidential records and information. Specifying what records are needed in the transition agreements helps clarify this.

Another administrative problem area can be the use of different eligibility criteria for preschoolers and for school-age services. The common solution to this can take two forms:

- Agreement about eligibility issues can be established through interagency work and policy review.
- Preschool staff should prepare parents for the possibility that the child's eligibility and/or diagnostic category may shift as children reach school age.

Goals of transition services

- **Ensure continuity of services.**
- **Minimize disruptions to the family system by facilitating adaptation to change.**
- **Ensure that children are prepared to function in the receiving program.**
- **Fulfill, in some cases, the legal requirements of federal law.**

Staff issues: Preschool staff often have inaccurate perceptions of the flexibility in elementary schools, while elementary teachers report needing more knowledge about children with disabilities. Training of both groups of staff often is necessary.

Staff may have decidedly different philosophies about the education of young children with disabilities. Focusing on the needs of individual children with disabilities and on the practices affecting that child is a tactic likely to result in more consensus about practices.

Family issues: Families worry about the loss of the support network established when their child was in preschool, about how professionals in the elementary schools will treat their child, and about how their child will fit into the social climate of the school. Remedies to these fears include:

-- Promoting strong information support systems for the parents while the child is still in preschool.
-- Giving families comprehensive information about the transition and the elementary school.
-- Allowing pre-transition visits to the classrooms targeted for the child.
-- Providing pre-transition meetings among parents and staff of the sending and receiving programs.
-- Identifying an elementary school staff member with whom the family can readily communicate.
-- Connecting parents with other parents of older children with disabilities.
-- Continuing some social support from staff at the preschool program after the transition.
-- Using a number of simple means (phone messages, daily notebooks, etc.) to maintain communication with elementary school staff.

(continued on reverse)

PS 027742

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

For more information, contact Loyd Little at 919-966-0867 or email <loyd_little@unc.edu>. Visit our web site at <www.fpg.unc.edu/~NCEDL>.

Service issues: The current recommended practice in early childhood programs is to integrate services into ongoing classroom practices. The more usual pattern, however, is to provide such services through pull-out arrangements.

Considerable evidence suggests that children with disabilities fare as well developmentally in inclusive as in segregated programs, and they have superior social and behavioral skills when placed in inclusive rather than segregated classes.

Child issues

A number of studies provide consistent evidence that preparing a child with special needs for early childhood transitions does not entail teaching specific preacademic or readiness skills... Rather, it involves teaching generic, functional skills that move a child toward increasing independence and increasing active, appropriate engagement alongside typically developing peers in instruction, play, and social activities.

(See Atwater, 1994)

Outcomes for school-age children with disabilities

The identification of legitimate outcomes for school-age students with disabilities is an issue requiring consideration. Billingsley et al.'s three-part framework -- promoting membership, social relationship skills, and competence -- appears useful, flexible, and sufficiently comprehensive.

Another issue focuses on parents of students with disabilities, and two points are pertinent:

- Despite available process and procedures, parents do not appear to be integral parts of the individual educational plan process
- Parents on average do not perceive being in a positive relationship with the schools

This issue appears to require fairly major adjustments to practices uses by schools; understanding how to promote adoption of different practices and how to sustain positive family-school relationships are clear research priorities.

Given the large number of adults who have regular contact with children who have disabilities, given the demands on these adults, and given the constraints of the situations, serious questions emerge about whether services for students with disabilities are adequately coordinated. Understanding how to promote and sustain coordination practices in early elementary school clearly is needed.

While a great deal is known about teaching students with disabilities, research continues to be needed in improving the efficiency of that instruction and its application in inclusive classrooms.

Some evidence speaks to the supports teachers need in providing instruction to students with disabilities; unfortunately, such supports do not, at least from the teachers' perspective, appear to be widespread. Thus, research aimed at making such supports more common seems important; however, as with other issues such investigations should focus on how schools can adopt and sustain the use of known supports and resources.

If you want to know more:

Billingsley, F.F., Galluci, C., Peck, C.A., Swartz, I.S., & Staub, D. (1996). "But those kids can't even do math": An alternative conceptualization of outcomes for inclusive education. *Special Education Leadership Review, 3,* 43-55.

Atwater, J.B., Orth-Lopes, L., Elliott, M., Carta, J.J., & Schwartz, I.S. (1994). Completing the circle: Planning and implementing transitions to other program. In M. Wolery and J.S. Wilbers (Eds.) *Including children with special needs in early childhood programs* (pp. 167-188). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

NCEDL is administratively housed at UNC-CH. This project is supported under the Education Research and Development Centers Program, PR/award number R307A60004, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed in these reports do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, or the U.S. Department of Education. Permission is granted to reprint this; we ask that you attribute the author of the paper on which this Spotlight is based and the National Center for Early Development & Learning.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE